

Governor's Commission on Environmental Justice & Sustainable Communities

Minutes March 26, 2003

ATTENDEES: Andrew Sawyers, Kirsti Uunila, Claudia Phillips, Jalonne White, Bob Knox, Jerry Gietka, Susan Aceti, Rich Hersey, Paul Oberle, Dawn McCleary, Gary Kelman, Stephanie Cobb Williams, Douglas Edwards, Jessica Brado, Bob Maimone, Bill Stack, Robyn Gilden, Bill Paul, Andy Lemer, Bonnie Wilson, George O'Leru

DATE: Wednesday, March 26, 2003

TIME: 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Department of the Environment, Aeris Conference Room
1800 Washington Boulevard, Baltimore MD 21230

Welcome

- Chairman Scot Spencer welcomed the Commission members and guests. Attendees introduced themselves.

Handouts:

- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Policy
- Public interest Law Center of Philadelphia's Draft Environmental Justice Protocol
- EPA, MDE, CEJSC Public Dialogues overview
- Earth Day Coalition and the US EPA Workshop registration

Discussions:

- Scot updated the Commission on the progress HB 970, sponsored by Delegate Davis to make the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities permanent by statuette. The bill has passed the House and will be heard by the Senate on Friday, March 28th at 7:00 p.m.

Andrew Sawyers added that there are three additional Environmental Justice related bills.

1. HB 1047, requiring the Hazardous Waste Facilities Siting Board to seek the comments of residents who live within 1 mile of the proposed site at least 90 days before the issuance of the required certificate of public necessity by the Board.
2. HB 969, establishing an Ombudsman Program in the Department of the Environment; requiring the Secretary of the Environment to appoint an Ombudsman; requiring the Ombudsman to receive and investigate specified complaints, use alternative dispute resolution procedures, and act as a liaison between citizens and the Department; requiring the Department to adopt certain regulations; etc.

3. HB 1121, prohibiting the Secretary of the Environment from issuing a permit to construct or operate a rubble landfill within 2 miles of Bowie State University or St. John AME Church; making the Act an emergency measure; etc.
- Andrew informed the Commission that the new leadership of MDE wants to take a more proactive role in Environmental Justice.
 - Andrew reported that Jerry Balter, from the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia will be speaking at the May CEJSC meeting. His draft *Environmental Justice Protocol*, which focuses on Public Health, was distributed to the Commission.
 - During next month's meeting, Elieen McGurty, a professor at Johns Hopkins University, will present the progress of her students who utilized the Environmental Justice Framework created by Community Index Subcommittee.
 - Also distributed was the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's *DEC Policy* for review and reference.
 - Robyn Gilden reported on the progress of the Community Health Subgroup. Andrew announced that Robin will chair this Subcommittee.

The Subcommittee met on March 10th. It's mission is to improve the quality of life for Maryland residents related to environmental health issues. During the meeting four goals emerged:

1. Prioritize local environmental health concerns
2. Increase access of environmental health data
3. Assess environmental health impact on specific communities
4. Improve environmental health decision making on personal, local and state wide levels

The Subgroup will also create a survey form to be used as a community index tool for obtaining information from citizens pertaining to their specific health issues.

They have given themselves a deadline of October/November 2003 to complete these tasks, to enable reporting at year's end.

The next Community Health Subcommittee meeting will be April 25th.

- Rev. Edwards reported that he has been working with the Prince George's County Council and two pieces of legislation have been drafted:
 1. CR-73-2002 For the purpose of establishing the Environmental Justice Task Force to advise the County on methods and criteria to mitigate the negative impacts of solid waste facilities on low income and minority communities.
 2. CB-8-2003 For the purpose of defining Class3 fills, requiring a detailed site plan and criteria for Class 3 fills in all zones where they are permitted and proving a limitation on grading permit renewals for Class 3 fills.
- Jalone White of MDE's Mobile Sources program will be working on "Information Sharing" for the Department. She will be providing link's etc. from MDE's website to other environmental information sources.

- The Commission discussed Public Dialogue forums. Andrew informed the group that EPA has awarded a grant, which MDE will match and The National Institute for Health and Sciences is also interested in public dialogues and may also provide a grant to support this effort.

Scot conveyed the importance getting the public dialogues started as this was a goal for 2003 in the 2002 Annual Report to the Governor.

Three locations for the public dialogues have been decided. The first will be in May or June in Baltimore City, the site will most likely be Morgan State University. Calvert County and Prince George's Counties will be next. Kirsti Uunila will provide assistance the logistics and planning of the Calvert County session. Rev. Edwards will help with the session in Prince George's County. Local government has to be involved.

Future locations for public dialogues discussed. Wicomico County, the City of Salisbury, Frederick County, Cumberland were some of the possible future public dialogue locations.

The group decided that it would work best to use a format where a few focus questions were used for the public dialogues along with time reserved for citizens to express other environmental justice concerns and be able to offer solutions. A suggestion was made to send out a survey to citizen groups and community groups for distribution to citizens in advance of the public dialogue session to get a template of what concerns there are in particular area. Bonnie Wilson stated that MML and MACO should also be contacted and asked to "spread the word" about the public dialogues.

- Andrew told the Commission of a Smart Sites grant being used to look into the redevelopment of small brownfields in disenfranchised areas.

Adjournment

- Andrew Sawyers thanked everyone for attending the meeting and encouraged everyone's future participation.
- The Commission's next meeting will be held on April 30, 2003 at the Maryland Department of the Environment, in the Aqua Conference Room, located in the Lobby.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle McFadden, March 27, 2003.